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SUBJECT: GAMBARI DISCUSSES NEXT STEPS ON BURMA

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, Permanent Representative.
For reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In a one-on-one meeting October 8, Special Adviser Gambari told Ambassador Khalilzad that he needed staff to follow up on his recent mission to Burma and that he planned to form a core group comprised of the U.S., China, Japan, India, the Russian Federation, Singapore (as ASEAN chair) and the EU or EC to "help him along the way." ASSK asked Gambari to pass a message to the Chinese, telling them she did not want to use the Olympics as leverage, and was open to direct contact. Gambari wants to return to Burma the last week in October, to exercise maximum pressure in the run-up to ASEAN meetings scheduled for mid-November. He plans to visit neighboring countries earlier. End Summary.

¶2. (C) On October 8, Ambassador Khalilzad met with SYG Special Adviser on Burma Ibrahim Gambari to discuss next steps. Gambari said he was trying to think through effective follow-up to his recent trip. He expressed concern about the capacity of his minuscule staff given the burgeoning demands, (a full-time and part-time professional, both lent from the Department of Political Affairs), and asked the Ambassador to weigh in with Ban and DPA U/S Lynn Pascoe, to get them encumbered permanently to Gambari's office. Gambari was also wrestling with what kind of media he should do, which would also require additional personnel.

Establishing a Core Group

¶3. (C) Gambari reported to the Ambassador that he had briefed the International Consultative Group on Myanmar (ICGM) earlier in the day, which has been moribund this year, comprised of Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Norway, Philippines, ROK, the Russian Federation, Singapore, Sweden, Thailand, the UK and U.S. He told the group that he intended to form a small core group of countries "which could specifically help him along the way." The group would include the U.S., China, Japan, India, the Russian Federation, Singapore (as ASEAN chair) and the EU or EC). He asked the U.S. to convene the first meeting in the next few days.

¶4. (C) Gambari underscored that things were moving forward with challenges ahead. The regime had met a benchmark with the October 8 appointment of Vice Minister for Labor Aung Kyi as the liaison to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK). Gambari also noted that ASSK did not reject the conditions imposed by General Than Shwe last week for a meeting with her. She told Gambari that she planned to discuss them with her party's executive committee. She stressed to Gambari that she was willing to consider power sharing with the military in a transition phase. Referring to Lee Kuan Yew's October 5 statement that Burma is a "time bomb" for the region, Gambari

also said that Singapore was preparing an offer to receive senior Burmese military officials if that would help a transition. What assurances to give the military, if any, would be a key issue to work through. The military was an important institution for the country and could not be allowed to disintegrate, ASSK told Gambari.

ASSK Sends Message to China

15. (C) ASSK also sent a message to China via Gambari. Wanting to be sensitive to Chinese concerns, the thrust of her message was not to fear a transition. A democratic Burma would bring stability and economic opportunity to the region and would benefit China. She apparently told the Chinese that she did not want to use the Olympics as leverage, and that she was open to direct contact if they so chose.

Gambari's Travel Plans

16. (C) Gambari said he wants to return to Burma the last week of October or first week of November. He believes that maximum pressure can be applied before upcoming ASEAN meetings scheduled for Nov. 18-20. As the SYG was currently working with China, India, Thailand, Malaysia and others in the region to ensure Gambari could return to Burma as soon as possible, Gambari also said he was considering visiting these countries beforehand.

KHALILZAD